

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----041139Z 071677 /15

O R 041010Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2073
INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 5771

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PK, US
SUBJECT: A-7 SALES

REF: STATE 128399

1. SUMMARY: I CONVEYED ON JUNE 4 POINTS IN REFTEL TO FOREIGN SECRETARY WHO HAD NOT RECEIVED AMBASSADOR YAQUB KHAN'S REPORT. COINCIDENTALLY, SHAHI HAD BEEN ABOUT TO CALL ME IN TO COMPLAIN ABOUT PRESS STORIES ON A-7 DECISION. SHAHI'S CONCERNS REFLECTED VIEWS OF BHUTTO WITH WHOM SHAHI HAD JUST MET. IN VIEW OF INADVERTENTLY EMBARRASSING PRESS TREATMENT OF A-7 DECISION, I BELIEVE IT WOULD HELP OUR POSITION HERE IF DEPT WERE TO MAKE PUBLIC USG WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER OTHER AIR-CRAFT SALES TO PAKISTAN, WITHIN THE PRESIDENT'S GUIDELINES. END SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ON AGHA SHAHI AT NOON, JUNE 4 TO INFORM HIM OF OUR DECISION ON THE A-7 SALE DRAWING ON UNDER SECRETARY BENSOM'S CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR YAQUB CONTAINED IN REFTEL. AGHA SHAHI HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A MEETING

WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS SIDE OF OUR TALK OBVIOUSLY REFLECTED THE TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF HIS
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CONVERSATION WITH BHUTTO. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT HE HAD WANTED TO SEE ME AS WELL AND SUGGESTED THAT I LEAD OFF.

3. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, AGHA SHAHI SAID HE HAD NOT YET HEARD FROM AMBASSADOR YAQUB ABOUT HIS CONVERSATION WITH UNDER SECRETARY BENSON. I EMPHASIZED THAT OUR DECISION

ON THE A-7 WAS MADE ON THE BASIS OF OUR NEW ARMS SALES POLICY ONLY. OUR POLICY GUIDELINES STRICTLY STATE THAT WE WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TO INTRODUCE A MAJOR SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEM INTO ANY REGION. THE A-7 SALE WAS THEREFORE PRECLUDED. I ADDED THAT WE ARE MINDFUL OF PAKISTAN'S DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS, PARTICULARLY FOR MODERN AIRCRAFT, AND WE ARE THEREFORE PREPARED TO CONSIDER GOP REQUESTS FOR COMBAT AIRCRAFT OTHER THAN THE A-7. I ALSO NOTED THAT THE MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR YAQUB HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF SEVERAL UNFORTUNATE NEWS ARTICLES ON THE A-7 SALE. I SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT THE INTERPRETATION IN THE NEW YORK TIMES OF THE DECISION WAS INACCURATE AND REITERATED IT WAS MADE ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR GLOBAL ARMS SALES POLICY.

4. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY REPLIED THAT HE HAS READ PRESIDENT CARTER'S ARMS SALES POLICY STATEMENT. HE REFERRED TO SPECIFIC PROVISIONS SUCH AS WE WOULD LOOK AT WHAT ARMS NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WERE OBTAINING AND THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE REGION. SHAHI SAID THAT IT WOULD SEEM THAT ONLY ONE ASPECT OF OUR NEW POLICY, I.E. A NO FIRST INTRODUCTION OF SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS, WAS BEING CONSIDERED. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS ONLY HIS VIEW IN PASSING AND ONCE HE RECEIVED A REPORT FROM AMBASSADOR YAQUB THE MFA WOULD GIVE US ITS CONSIDERED POSITION.

5. AGHA SHAHI WENT ON TO SAY THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED OVER THE PUBLICITY GIVEN THE DECISION ON THE A-7. HE QUOTED BOTH AN AFP REPORT AND THE NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL

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TIMES STORY CONTAINED IN STATE 128247. SHAHI SAID, REFLECTING, I BELIEVE, HIS TALK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THAT THE GOP WAS "VERY CONCERNED" THAT THESE ARTICLES HAVE APPEARED AT THIS DELICATE MOMENT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS NEGOTIATING WITH THE PNA. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY THEN REPEATED SECRETARY VANCE'S STATEMENT AFTER HIS TALK ON PARIS WITH AHMED AZIZ ON THE NEED FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND OUR DESIRE TO HEAL THE WOUNDS OF THE PAST. SHAHI SAID THAT CONSEQUENTLY THE GOP WAS "VERY SURPRISED" TO SEE SUCH PUBLICITY. HE ALSO MENTIONED THE LOS ANGELES TIMES STORY ON THE O'KEEFE MEMORANDUM.

6. SHAHI ADDED THAT THIS KIND OF PUBLICITY DIRECTLY AFFECTS THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN. THE OPPOSITION MAY WELL THINK THAT THE UNITED STATES WANTS BHUTTO OUT AND DOES NOT WANT TO SEE A SETTLEMENT. HE THEN RAISED THE USUAL WHIPPING BOY OF THE BBC AND SAID THAT THE RECENT PRESS ARTICLES IN THE UNITED STATES COMBINED WITH BBC

REPORTING "CREATES SUPPORT IN PEOPLE'S MINDS FOR THE
SUPPOSITION THAT FOREIGN POWERS ARE SUPPORTING THE
OPPOSITION."

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O R 041010Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2074
INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 5771

EXDIS

7. THE NLREIGN SECRETARY WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE NEW YORK
TIMES IS AN AUTHORITATIVE PAPER. IT SEEMS AS IF THE
UNITED STATES IS NOW "LEANING" ON THE INDIAN SIDE AND
THAT PAKISTAN'S AND INDIA'S POSITIONS WITH THE UNITED
STATES HAVE BEEN REVERSED. HE ADDED THAT IT ALMOST SEEMS
AS IF THERE IS AN ALIGNMENT NOW BETWEEN THE U.S. AND
INDIA. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ALSO NOTED THAT THESE
EVENTS PUT IN DOUBT THE PROTESTATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP
AFTER THE PARIS TALKS.

8. I RESPONDED THAT WE REGRET THE SPECULATIVE PRESS
STORIES WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN THE U.S. HOWEVER, OUR
OFFICIAL POSITION IS CLEAR AND WAS CONVEYED TO AMBASSADOR
YAQUB BY UNDER SECRETARY BENSON. I ALSO NOTED THAT THE
DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN IS ANNOUNCING THE A-7 DECISION HAD
SOUGHT TO LAY TO REST THE SPECULATIONS ABOUT POLITICAL
MOTIVATIONS. I REITERATED THAT A TRUE REFLECTION OF THE
USG ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN WAS GIVEN BY
SECRETARY VANCE IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENT AFTER HIS MEETING
WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER IN PARIS. I THEN ADDED THAT THE
SECRETARY HAD REPORTED HIS MEETING TO PRESIDENT CARTER,
WHO HAS PERSONALLY RAFFIRMED HIS DESIRE TO GET U.S./
PAKISTAN RELATIONS BACK ON THE TRACK OF CLOSE RELATIONS
BETWEEN FRIENDS AND ALLIES. (SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY TOLD
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THE IRANIANS THIS IS THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW, I THOUGHT IT WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL, IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR CONVERSATION, TO MENTION IT TO SHAHI.)

9. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY CLOSED BY SAYING THAT HE HOPED I WOULD REPORT OUR CONVERSATION TO THE SKOATE DEPARTMENT AND THAT THE USG WOULD DO SOMETHING TO COUNTERACT THE NEGATIVE IMPRESSION FOSTERED BY THE RECENT PRESS STORIES. I RESPONDED THAT I WOULD CERTAINLY REPORT THE GOP VIEWS TO MY GOVERNMENT AND ADDED THAT WE HAVE MADE EFFORTS TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

10. COMMENT: THE FOREIGN SECRETARY WAS CALM AND SOFT-SPOKEN THROUGHOUT OUR MEETING. HE OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT WE WAS SPEAKING MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EMPHASIZING HIS GOVERNMENT'S DEEP CONCERN OVER THE ARTICLES IN THE AMERICAN PRESS. IT IS ALSO INTERESTING THAT WHEN SPEAKING OF THE DELETERIOUS EFFECT OF SUCH ARTICLES HE, MOST PROBABLY MIRRORING THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS, EMPHASIZED THAT THEY COULD ENDANGER THE BHUTTO/OPPOSITION TALKS AND WOULD STRENGTHEN THOSE IN OPPOSITION WHO THINK THE USG IS AGAINST THE PM. H F COMMENTS ON THE SPECULATION IN PAKISTAN THAT LP ARE "REALIGNING" IN FAVOR OF INDIA ALSO MOST PROBABLY REFLECTS A SUSPICION HELD BY BHUTTO.

11. SHAHI'S REACTION TO THE PRESS STORIES WAS EXPRESSED IN Milder TERMS THAN WE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. IN THIS REGARD, IT HELPED THAT I WAS ABLE TO ANTICIPATE HIS ARGUMENT BY STATING OUR POSITION BEFORE THE GOP HAD RECEIVED IT FROM AMBASSADOR YAQUB KHAN. NEVERTHELESS, I BELIEVE THAT SALT HAS BEEN INADVERTENDLY AND UNNECESSARILY RUBBED IN BHUTTO'S WOUNDS BY THE PRE-MATURE AND SPECULATIVE REPORTING ON THE A-7 DECISION. I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE HIGHLY USEFUL IN MITIGATING THE DAMAGE IF THE COMMENTS MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ON JUNE 3

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COULD BE AMPLIFIED, EITHER BY AN ADDITIONAL STATEMENT OR BY APPROPRIATE BACKGROUNDING, TO REFLECT USG WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER SALES OF OTHER AIRCRAFT WITHIN THE PRESIDENT'S GUIDELINES.

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 04-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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